

EDITORIALS

A BICENTENNIAL EDITORIAL

The Western Journal of Medicine Salutes America—1776-1976

AMERICA IS OUR COUNTRY and most of us love it. Like most loved persons or things, it can be disappointing, exasperating or even infuriating at times. But who else, what else or where else is better? America is our country and we will surely continue to love it. It has yet fully to achieve its destiny. What can medicine do to help?

THE WESTERN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE's recognition of the bicentennial year is in three parts. First, a series of bicentennial editorials appearing throughout the year seek to relate medicine and events in health care to the state of the nation at this moment in its history. Second, this Bicentennial Issue hopes to project a sense of a continuum from medicine on the Mayflower, through the American revolution, and then the flow of pioneering America westward to provide the beginnings of medicine in the West. Lacking description in this issue, but well known to all, is the growth of medical science and innovation in medical care in the West which have made and continue to make notable contributions to the na-

tion and to the world. And third, and perhaps reflecting some of the spirit of those physicians and others who have sought the good life in the West, this issue of the WESTERN JOURNAL begins a forum for a broadly-based discussion of what might be the relationships of medicine and health care to quality of life, something which seems to be coming within the reach of an ever-growing number of Americans and people elsewhere in the world.

In this bicentennial year medicine and health care find themselves in a central position in a rapidly changing America. This central position carries with it an opportunity to play an important and potentially even portentous role in helping to shape the future of our country. The WESTERN JOURNAL salutes America and hopes that the genius within medicine can and will rise to match this opportunity for leadership—not only to reduce the pain and suffering of those afflicted or to cure their ailments but to help make a better quality of life for all a lasting achievement of this great nation.

—MSMW

Medicine in the 2000's

THE STAGE already is beginning to be set for what medicine will be like in the twenty hundreds. It will be set by forces and trends now discernible and actually well underway, and also by events scientific, social, economic and political—which are, and always will be, quite unpredictable. It may be assumed that there will be much that is different. Perhaps we can glean something by attempting to identify some of the recognizable forces now at work and then see how they might affect medicine and health care in the 21st century.

- One may anticipate the further commingling of the concepts of patient care, or sick care, with prevention, or health care. Even now these are

not really separable either in the knowledge base they require or in practice. Prevention will be accepted as a proper concern of medicine and it seems certain to be extended to address all aspects of ill health even when these have behavioral, social or economic causes.

- There will surely be continued expansion of medical science and technology. Exactly what this will be is quite unpredictable but that it will occur is not. It will bring about new kinds of specialization among health professionals and further interdependence among them. There will be a need for flexibility, adaptation, coordination and capability for change among all health professionals.

- There will be a limit on the portion of the gross national product allocated to health,